

LET'S Talk

FALL 2003

HEALTHY BODIES • SOUND MINDS • A SAFE PLACE TO WORK



World AIDS Day December 1, 2003

AT THE END OF 2002, approximately 38.6 million adults and 3.2 million children were living with HIV, and during the year, 5 million new people became infected with the virus.

The theme of World AIDS Day 2003 is Stigma and Discrimination. In many parts of the world, discrimination prevents known HIV-infected people from securing a job or caring for their families. Discrimination can cause isolation and prevent people with HIV/AIDS from seeking or obtaining treatment that could save their lives.

If you would like confidential information about HIV/AIDS, contact the CDC AIDS Hotline, 24 hours daily at **800-342-2437**; **TTY, 800-243-7889**.

For additional information or publications on HIV/AIDS in the workplace, contact the CDC National Prevention Information Network at **800-458-5231**, M-F, 9 a.m.–6 p.m. ET, or visit www.cdcnpin.org.

Do You Have a Healthy Attitude?

Studies show optimism and a good social network can improve your physical well-being.

A POSITIVE ATTITUDE, faith and good relationships with others can make you healthier, experts agree.

No one's sure exactly how some of these factors contribute to good health, but study after study shows they do.

"People who are basically optimistic feel better and live longer than those who aren't," says James S. Gordon, M.D., founder and director of the Center for Mind-Body Medicine in Washington, DC.

A positive attitude depends on genetic influences, upbringing, health habits, social connections, emotional support and spiritual involvement. You can't change some of these factors, but you can learn new ways of thinking and behavior to help maintain a positive mind-set — and live a healthier life.

"Your beliefs about a particular situation are very important in terms of your immune system's response to stress. The more optimistic you are, the higher the level and function of key immune cells in your body," says psychologist Suzanne Segerstrom, Ph.D., an assistant professor at the University of Kentucky. "While a stronger immune system doesn't necessarily mean you feel better, it does affect how easily you get sick, or how well you respond to or recover from illness or surgery."

So does having a good connection to family, friends and acquaintances. In



general, social ties guard against stress and contribute to a positive attitude. Researchers have proven that they also help you survive major illnesses and heal more quickly.

"A strong social support system encourages better health habits," says psychiatrist Redford B. Williams, M.D., director of behavioral research at Duke University Medical Center. Company can also ward off depression.

Experts warn, however, that some people feel more comfortable being alone. If forging ties to family and friends actually stresses you out, you're better off respecting your need for solitude rather than trying to become someone you're not, suggests Dr. Segerstrom.

"As you practice healthy habits, you affect your health, positively," says Dr. Gordon. "You soon feel the results of your efforts. That reinforces not only a positive attitude, but also the control you now have over your life — to make it the best it can be."

what's new

Late-Breaking Health News

>> **On-the-job social support is associated with lower blood pressure** during the workday and smaller blood pressure increases during job-related stressful moments, according to a study of New York City traffic enforcement agents.

The study of 70 male and female agents ages 22 to 58, published in *Psychosomatic Medicine*, was consistent with previous research that suggests having contact with a socially supportive person at work reduces cardiovascular reactions in threatening, high-stress situations.

The researchers also found males and females had different preferred sources of social support. Lower blood pressure among females tended to have a link with immediate-supervisor support, while males tended to benefit from coworker support.

>> **Skin cancer threat is greatest for older men** and individuals with multiple risk factors. A 15-year study of 1.3 million Americans found 44 percent of those diagnosed with melanoma, a potentially fatal skin cancer, were white males older than 50.

Researchers at the American Academy of Dermatology also found men of any age with a changing mole or fair skin were most likely to have skin cancer. Other risk factors for anyone include having fair skin, a family history of a changing mole or a family history of skin cancer.

Skin cancer is a large and growing problem in the United States: Nearly half of all new cancers are skin-related. This year, more than 1 million new cases will be diagnosed, and it's estimated the disease will claim 9,800 lives.



>> **CHILDREN WHO HAVE PRESCRIPTIONS FOR ONE OR MORE ASTHMA MEDICATIONS have fewer visits to the emergency room (ER) for asthma than those who haven't been prescribed such medications, according to a new study by the University of Michigan Health System.**

The study of 19,000 children with asthma looked at the frequency of children's asthma-related ER visits, and how rates of ER visits vary by age, gender, race and prescriptions for fast-acting "rescue" medications as well as long-term preventive asthma drugs.

More than 4 million American children younger than 18 have an asthma attack each year, and more than 200,000 children are hospitalized for asthma-related problems annually.

See your physician for guidance and advice regarding a specific health condition.

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SPECIAL REPORTS

- 540** How to Quit Smoking
- 541** Sensible Weight Loss
- 542** Lowering Your Cholesterol
- 543** Reducing Your Stress
- 544** Walking for Fitness
- 545** Workstation Comfort
- 546** Fixing an Aching Back
- 547** Start An Exercise Program
- 548** Controlling Allergies
- 549** Lowering Health-Care Costs
- 550** Living With Arthritis
- 551** Dealing With Headaches
- 552** High Blood Pressure

Could You Be at Risk?

The Dangers of Lead Poisoning

LEAD POISONING CAN AFFECT ANYONE, but young children are most likely to be harmed. Almost one million children ages 6 and younger have enough lead in their blood to cause health problems.

THE DANGERS

- The younger the children, the more vulnerable they are to lead's toxic effects.
- A pregnant woman's exposure to lead can harm her unborn child.
- Lead affects children's developing brains and nervous systems, resulting in mental and behavioral impairments.
- Most children are poisoned in their homes by swallowing dust contaminated by lead from peeling or damaged lead paint.
- Children playing outside can be poisoned by lead in soil from paint that has peeled from outside walls and other sources.
- Remodeling projects in well-cared-for older homes have caused some of the most serious cases of lead poisoning.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- If your home was built before 1978, assume the paint contains lead and have your home inspected.
- Keep children and pregnant women out of the room during any repair work that involves paint.
- Clean wood floors and windowsills with detergent to remove any dust with lead in it. Thoroughly clean after you paint or remodel your home.

TESTS FOR EXPOSURE

The only way to find out if your children have lead poisoning is with a blood test taken in doctor's offices and clinics.

For more information, call the Lead-Safe Information Center at 800-424-LEAD.

More Good Reasons to Quit Smoking

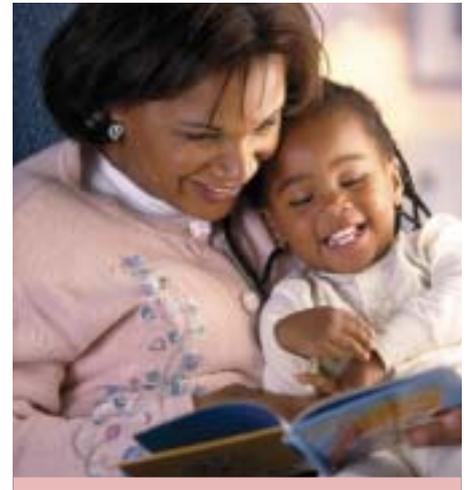
MOST PEOPLE ARE AWARE OF THE MOST OBVIOUS HEALTH RISKS OF SMOKING, such as heart disease and lung cancer. But many lesser-known health problems are associated with the habit — and some affect the smoker's family members.

For Yourself

- A study of 1,000 people reported in the *Archives of General Psychiatry* found heavy smokers were almost twice as likely to develop major depression than infrequent smokers.
- Women who smoke more than 10 cigarettes a day are 40 percent more likely to enter menopause early, according to a study reported in the *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*.
- Women who smoke more than 20 cigarettes a day had 3-1/2 times the risk for ectopic pregnancy as nonsmoking women, according to a study reported in the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*.
- A study of more than 9,000 older people showed current smokers had the largest decline in tests of mental ability as compared with former smokers and nonsmokers, according to researchers at the American Academy of Neurology.
- Smokers with type 1 diabetes have a greater risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, kidney disease and stroke than nonsmokers with the disease, according to a study in the *American Journal of Hypertension*.
- In a study of 377,481 women, those who had smoked for more than 20 years had a 24 to 39 percent higher risk of rheumatoid arthritis.

For Your Family

- People married to smokers have double the risk of ischemic stroke, compared with those who live with nonsmokers.
- Preschoolers whose parents smoke are six times more likely than children of nonsmokers to say they'll smoke later in life, according to the American Heart Association.
- A study of 8,500 women found that children of mothers who smoked during pregnancy had more ear infections.
- Children whose mothers were exposed to secondhand smoke during pregnancy are more likely than other infants to have genetic defects similar to those associated with leukemia and lymphomas.



FOH has a smoking cessation program. For additional information, please check the FOH web site at www.foh.dhhs.gov and click on "What We Do," or contact Lou Glass at 206-615-2513.

Maintaining Your Mental Equilibrium

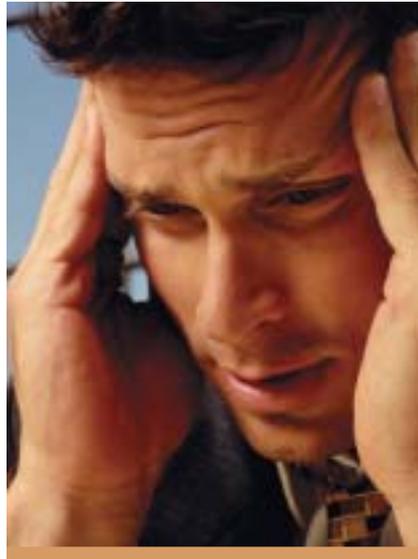
OVER TIME, CHRONIC STRESS AND ANXIETY can cause a hormonal chain of events that can lead to illnesses such as heart disease, depression and ulcers. Out-of-control stress also can impair your job performance and drain your energy. But you can take steps to deal with your physical response to stress.

“Performing a daily de-stress routine can effectively counteract stress and anxiety, so the results of stress don’t build up and cause problems,” says Gerald W. Vest, professor emeritus of sociology at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces.

STRESS RX

■ **BELLY BREATHING.** For immediate stress relief, Vest recommends placing your left hand over your heart, your right hand on your belly and breathing deeply. “By observing the rise and fall of your breath, you’ll naturally begin to relax,” he says

■ **ARM YOURSELF.** Massage your right shoulder with your left hand. Then feather down your arm with gentle soothing motions. Repeat on the other arm. “The nervous system is connected



to all the cells of the body. By soothing the skin of your shoulders and arms, you’ll immediately start to relax,” says Vest.

■ **SAVING FACE.** For quick stress relief, Vest recommends lightly massaging your temples, smoothing your eyebrows and massaging your cheekbones and jaw. Also, spend a few seconds pinching and stretching your ear lobes, a typically tense area.

FOH **FEDERAL OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH**
a component of the US Public Health Service
Program Support Center
Department of Health and Human Services

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Eating omega-3 fatty acids from fish and plant sources can protect your heart. These healthful fats make blood less likely to form clots that cause heart attacks, and they protect against irregular heartbeats that cause sudden cardiac death. Food sources include mackerel, lake trout, herring, sardines, albacore tuna, salmon, tofu, soybeans, walnuts and flaxseeds.

VOD284

American Heart Association, Dallas, TX.

People who live in neighborhoods built before 1974 are more likely than those in newer areas to walk a mile, one study found. The older neighborhoods usually have sidewalks, a dense network of streets and a mix of residences and businesses, all of which may encourage walking instead of driving.

Self, 350 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10017

Stale makeup can cause infections. Discard mascara after three months; facial cleanser and moisturizer after six months; and concealer, lip gloss, loose powder, powder blusher, powder eye shadow and toner after one year.

Cooking Light, 2100 Lakeshore Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209

Pay attention to the speed at which you talk. You may have a habit of speaking too slowly if people often interrupt you. Or you may speak too quickly if people often say, “whoa, wait a minute.”

When the Little Things Count ... And They Always Count by Barbara Pachter, Marlowe and Co., 2001

Fifty-eight percent of American investors use newspapers to help them make financial decisions; 52 percent, a financial planner or CPA; 41 percent, financial Web sites; 30 percent, stockbrokers; and 14 percent, Wall Street analysts.

USA Today, 7950 Jones Branch Drive, McLean, VA 22108